

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJ: TALKS GAIN MOMENTUM: MARTIAL LAW LIFTED

REF: ISLAMABAD 5861

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE THIRD SESSION OF TALKS
BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PNA ON JUNE 7 RESULTED IN
AGREEMENT "IN PRINCIPLE" ON THE BASIC ISSUE OF ELECTIONS
IN ACCORD WITH ONE OF THE TWO FORMULAS PRESENTED BY BHUTTO
THE PREVIOUS DAY. WE ASSUME THIS MEANS BOTH SIDES HAVE
NOW FORMALLY AGREED ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD, BUT THE TIMING
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AND MODALITIES REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT. AT THE END OF
THE THREE AND ONE-HALF HOUR SESSION AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S
HOUSE IN RAWALPINDI, PNA LEADER PROFESSOR GHAFOR AHMED
ANNOUNCED THAT A SUBCOMMITTEE CONSISTING OF HIMSELF AND
GOP FINANCE MINISTER HAFEEZ PIRZADA WOULD MEET JUNE 8
TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS AND SUBMIT ITS FINDINGS TO BOTH
SIDES AT THE NEXT BINARY NEGOTIATING SESSION ON JUNE 9.

GHAFOOR ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO LIFT MARTIAL LAW IMMEDIATELY FROM LAHORE, KARACHI AND HYDERABAD IN VIEW OF THE CONTINUING PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. PPP NEGOTIATOR MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI LATER CLARIFIED THAT THE ARMY WOULD REMAIN IN CITIES LIKE SIALKOT, LYALLPUR AND MULTAN "WITHOUT AUTHORITY." MORE THAN 12,000 PRISONERS HELD UNDER SECTION 144 HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN RELEASED. THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS THAT 2,000 MORE BEING HELD ON OTHER CHARGES HAVE ALSO BEEN SET FREE, LEAVING APPROXIMATELY 1,000 STILL IN DETENTION.

2. ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE FINAL SHAPE OF AN AGREEMENT, PROFESSOR GHAFOOR INFORMED NEWSMEN AFTER THE TALKS ON JUNE 7 THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT THE ELECTION ISSUE WOULD BE SETTLED ON JUNE 9 AFTER THE SUBCOMMITTEE WORKS OUT THE KEY POINTS. OTHER ISSUES LIKE THE EMERGENCY AND THE FATE OF THE REMAINING DETENUS, HE SAID, WOULD BE TAKEN UP AFTER THE "BASIC MATTER IS RESOLVED."

3. COMMENTING ON THE PROGRESS OF THE TALKS IN THE PAKISTAN TIMES ON JUNE 8, H.K. BURKI SPECULATED THAT ELECTIONS MIGHT BE HELD IN EARLY NOVEMBER. HE OBSERVED THAT THIS WOULD ALLOW FOR A REASONABLE CAMPAIGN PERIOD BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC FASTING MONTH OF RAMAZAN WHICH WILL END IN THE MIDDLE OF SEPTEMBER. SPECULATION ABOUT THE TIMING OF ELECTIONS FROM MOST OTHER SOURCES VARIES FROM AUGUST TO DECEMBER. AT THE BEGINNING OF NEGOTIATIONS, THE PNA WANTED ELECTIONS BY MID-AUGUST AND THE GOVERNMENT HELD OUT FOR MARCH 1978 AT THE EARLIEST. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BURKI'S MENTION OF EARLY NOVEMBER PERHAPS SUGGESTS A REASONABLE COMPROMISE DATE. CONSTABLE

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